



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Jonnycake Center of Westerly Invites Community to Participate in Adopt-a-Family Program**  
*Assistance for Neighbors in Need to Purchase Gifts & Meals*

**Westerly, RI – The Jonnycake Center of Westerly** invites the community to participate in its 2021 holiday-time **Adopt-a-Family program**. This annual program provides **financial assistance for gifts for local children**, as well as ensures that neighbors in need have **access to supplies for holiday meals**.

**Households who can benefit from financial assistance for meals and presents** can sign up through Jonnycake Center of Westerly Social Services. Email [SocialServices@jonnycake.org](mailto:SocialServices@jonnycake.org), call (401) 377-8069 and select option 1, or visit 23 Industrial Drive in Westerly, RI during the office's operating hours (Mondays 12-3pm, Tuesdays/Wednesdays/Fridays 9am-12pm, Thursdays 9am-12pm & 3pm-6pm).

**Donors** are encouraged to register by emailing Lee Eastbourne, Executive Director, at [leastbourne@jonnycake.org](mailto:leastbourne@jonnycake.org), call (401) 377-8069 and select ext. 106, or visit 23 Industrial Drive in Westerly.

The **registration deadline for adoptees and donors is Monday, October 25**.

The Adopt-a-Family program has helped bring holiday magic to thousands of local children since its inception, and the Center is pleased to make holiday meals possible annually for hundreds of Westerly-area families. Before the pandemic, volunteer groups from throughout the region would visit the Jonnycake Center of Westerly to sort and distribute a multitude of toys and gifts that concerned citizens from the community had donated for the program. The Center's Food Pantry would distribute meals and supplies so that no neighbor would have to go without a traditional holiday dinner.

In 2020, faced with the challenge of continuing to serve the community while protecting public health during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Center reinvented its Adopt-a-Family program. Instead of inviting large groups of volunteers to accept, quarantine, sort, and distribute physical presents for every registered family, the Center provided financial assistance for each family in an equivalent amount of what the gifts would have cost. Each adoptee family received a supply of gift cards to local retailers so that parents could make their own unique and personal choices for their children's gifts, as well as reduce the likelihood of community-based COVID-19 transmission. The Food Pantry also offered gift cards to Westerly-area grocers so that adoptees could select their own ingredients for their holiday meals.

As a result of the retooled program, families of **498 local children** gained access to financial assistance for gifts, and **1,214 neighbors from 447 households** received assistance to purchase holiday meals in 2020. Based on the success of the restructured program, the same model will be used for 2021.

"We took a risk in changing Adopt-a-Family in 2020, but we all felt we could not let our community down by canceling the program, especially in such a challenging year" said **Beth Freeman**, lead coordinator of Adopt-a-Family. "Our holiday gifts and meals program is one of the Center's signature initiatives, and we had to make tough decisions in order to continue the program in a healthy, responsible manner. We didn't know how adoptees would react, but the response was more positive than we could have imagined. In addition to protecting our community's health, adoptees overwhelmingly enjoyed being able to shop for their families themselves. We are beyond grateful to every person who donated financially in 2020 so that we could have the resources to make the holidays a little brighter for those in need."

Gift cards for registered clients will be distributed on Saturday, November 13 and Sunday, November 14 at the Jonnycake Center of Westerly. Additional details will be announced through the press, the Center's website, and social media.

To learn about the Jonnycake Center of Westerly, visit [jonnycake.org](http://jonnycake.org), call (401) 377-8069, or visit 23 Industrial Drive in Westerly, RI during operating hours. To make a financial contribution towards the Center's Food Pantry and Social Services, please visit [jonnycake.org/donate-2](http://jonnycake.org/donate-2) or call (401) 377-8069.

**About The Jonnycake Center of Westerly**

The Jonnycake Center of Westerly's mission is to provide a continuum of services in cooperation with other agencies in our service area to assist people through crisis situations and work with each individual to find a path out of dependency toward self-sufficiency. For more information, visit [jonnycake.org](http://jonnycake.org), become a fan on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/jonnycakecenter), follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/jonnycakecenter) and

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